



Department of Justice

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HOGSETT DISCUSSES YEAR-END RESULTS OF VIOLENT CRIME INITIATIVE, ADDITIONAL EVANSVILLE PROSECUTION

*United States Attorney rides with Evansville Police Department to personally
observe areas with higher crime rates*

PRESS RELEASE

EVANSVILLE – After spending the second shift riding along with Evansville Police Department officers in high crime neighborhoods yesterday, United States Attorney Joseph H. Hogsett today discussed year-end results from the ongoing Violent Crime Initiative (VCI). Hogsett also announced charges against six individuals who are alleged to have operated a methamphetamine operation in the area.

“As we near the end of the year, I believe it is important to pause and reflect on the results we have had over the last twelve months,” Hogsett said. “And I am pleased to report that thanks to unprecedented cooperation between federal and local law enforcement, our Violent Crime Initiative is producing successes here in Evansville and across the state.”

Announced by Hogsett in March of this year, the initiative represents a comprehensive district-wide strategy to combat drug traffickers and criminals that use and carry firearms in their illegal activities through improved local collaboration and aggressive federal prosecution.

Last night, as part of the Violent Crime Initiative, Hogsett rode the second shift with officers from the Evansville Police Department. Hogsett noted that these “ride-alongs” help identify the challenges faced by law enforcement in some of southern Indiana’s most challenged areas. Since March, Hogsett has traveled to all sixty counties in the southern district of Indiana, meeting with law enforcement officers and promoting federal-local cooperation in prosecuting repeat violent offenders – the “worst of the worst” – with federal charges when appropriate.

In the last year, the VCI has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of gun-related charges – from 14 felony possession of a firearm charges in 2010 to 96 already in 2011. Major

drug trafficking indictments are up 100% from where they were two years ago. Drug seizures have similarly increased seven-fold over 2010 figures.

“These year-end numbers tell an important story about the significant progress we have made since March” Hogsett said. “By improving communication and collaboration with our hardworking local law enforcement partners, we’re making considerable strides toward reducing violent crime in our communities.”

Hogsett also discussed the U.S. Attorney Office’s efforts to combat organized drug trafficking in the region, specifically citing the work that has been done to reduce local methamphetamine production and distribution. Hogsett spoke Thursday morning in Jasper as part of a joint federal-local training on methamphetamine law enforcement in Indiana.

Hogsett cited the recent indictment of six individuals who are alleged to have participated in a methamphetamine operation in the Evansville area as an indication that the office’s efforts are having a real impact. The charges followed an investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, Kentucky State Police, Indiana State Police, and the Owensboro Police Department.

“Thanks to the hard work of our federal and local law enforcement partners, we can announce today that yet another Evansville-area drug trafficking operation has been dismantled,” Hogsett said. “These charges reiterate a message we have delivered time and time again this year – if you are trafficking drugs in our neighborhoods, you will be caught and you will be punished with the full force of federal law.”

The six defendants charged with knowingly conspiring to possess with intent to distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine include:

- Vicente Vasquez, age 37
- Victor Albin Johnson Jr., age 52
- Nickolas Presley, a/k/a Tricky, age 24
- Christopher Scott Cowan, age 47
- Kenneth Franz, age 53
- James Canary, age 57

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle P. Brady, who will prosecute the case for the government, the six defendants all face up to life in prison if they are found guilty. In addition, each could be fined up to \$10,000,000 by the court. An initial hearing will be scheduled in Evansville before a U.S. Magistrate Judge.

Hogsett explained why he believes the Violent Crime Initiative and a renewed focus on dismantling drug operations will ultimately help make Indiana’s streets safer for both residents and the law enforcement officers who protect them: “We are sending a serious message that if you are the ‘worst of the worst,’ if you are terrorizing your community or threatening the safety of law enforcement officials, you are going to face federal charges and you are going to prison for a long, long time.”

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